

PRE PROOF VERSION OF: Moyle, L. and Coomber, R. (2016) 'Bourdieu on supply: utilising the 'theory of practice' to understand complexity and culpability in heroin and crack cocaine user-dealing'. *European Journal of Criminology* [early online – June 2, 2016].

## **Bourdieu on supply: utilising the 'theory of practice' to understand complexity and culpability in heroin and crack cocaine user-dealing.**

### **ABSTRACT**

The act of user-dealing has largely been explored within criminology in conjunction with the 'drug-crime' link or with focus on ethnography and subculture. While it is known that many users of drugs such as heroin and crack cocaine engage in small-scale supply as a way of generating revenue, less is known about the particular interplay of social context and choice that leads them to pick this income generating activity over other potential options. Contributing to a burgeoning literature, this article explores the constrained choices of user-dealers with reference to Bourdieu's 'theory of practice' (1977). Through locating stories of failure in user-dealer narratives, we utilise this novel approach in criminology, illuminating the importance of working with all of the interrelated concepts of habitus, field and capital in appreciating user-dealing as 'practice'. It is argued that application of this framework affords the previously unharnessed opportunity to use Bourdieusian theory to understand notions of culpability when sentencing this group.

**KEY WORDS: DRUG DEALING; DRUG SUPPLY; BOURDIEU; HABITUS, CAPITAL**

### **BACKGROUND: WHY BOURDIEU?**

Bourdieuian approaches to understanding complex criminal aetiology and behaviour are gaining momentum within the study of crime (Shammas and Sandberg, 2015; Chan 2004; Fraser, 2011; Bourgois and Schonberg, 2009). In no small part this is because, for an increasing number of crime researchers, it provides some opportunities to both acknowledge that agency and structure are complexly interwoven and intersectional, but also provides an

analytical framework with which to engage with that intersectionality in empirical research. In that sense it provides a specific method to go beyond some of the simpler accounts that, for example, either emphasise human volition where skills, rationality and competence are prioritised, or positivist empiricist studies that essentially deny human creativity and choice through focus on cause and effect (Young, 2011). In practice, in much crime analysis, the relationship is of course not presented in such polarised ways. Theorists and researchers are often situated somewhere on an epistemological continuum whereby the perceived extent of choice and constraint is to a greater or lesser degree. Brownstein, Crimmins and Spunt (2000) for example - in attempting to move away from an overly structural positioning on drug market related violence that 'classical' models - have emphasised interactional dynamics between individuals and groups to be as important as structural conditions in inflecting upon situational conditions that can produce either stability or violence in drug market conditions. Beyond acknowledgement however, they did this in a largely descriptive way without reference to a theoretical framework to enable such analysis. It will be argued here that a Bourdieusian framework for understanding crime offers an approach that has the capacity to intricately capture and analyse real world activity, whilst providing the potential to view broadly where on the continuum agency and structure impact. This was a primary methodological aim of Bourdieu who sought to gain a more complex and holistic understanding of the social world through highlighting the often implicit influences on individuals and their everyday 'practices' gained through the conceptual vehicles used in his theory of practice (Crawshaw and Bunton, 2009). Other frameworks may be utilised to help understand such dynamics; Measham and Shiner (2009:505) for example advocate the use of 'situated choice' and 'structured action', drawing on Giddens' structuration as another way of analysing the complex relations between subject and structure in regard to the normalisation debate. While all frameworks have their strengths and weakness, it is our aim here to present a case for a Bourdiesian approach to have compelling utility.

It is important however not to vanish up an epistemological impasse. It may now be apposite, as well as obvious to many that to take an epistemological position that refuses to privilege structure over agency or vice versa theoretically is problematic and sufficient for that to be ‘...ground enough for ceasing to consider it a serious claim’ (Archer, 1988: x). It is also paying unwarranted lip service to apply this relative equity in all empirical circumstances at all times and to ignore that sometimes structure can be over-bearing and play a stronger role and reduce (at times) the opportunities of agency to inflect on behaviour and vice versa (Coomber, 2015). A Bourdieusian approach can accommodate such situated dynamics.

Brownstein, Crimmins and Spunt (2000) represent a middle road but traditionally, within research, the drug dealer has largely been presented as an immoral liberal subject, rationally pursuing self interest without restraint (see Dwyer, 2009; Jacques et al. 2013), or as an actor widely affected by structural disadvantage and as compelled into this illegitimate economy through ‘addiction’, poverty or social disorganisation (see Dunlap et al., 2010; Yonas et al., 2007). Bypassing these subjectivist/determinist extremes, a Bourdieusian approach for understanding criminality broadly considers how for example, wider cultural and social structures such as poverty, unemployment and class interact at individual and group level to shape unconscious behaviours and disposition. Offering the opportunity to explain prevalence of criminal behaviour by certain groups, this theoretical approach also has the important potential to explore why those with similar experiences from the same group take a non-crime pathway. This article aims to demonstrate the utility of a Bourdieusian approach to understanding heroin and crack user-dealers and the differential approaches to criminality found among this group through utilising Bourdieu’s ‘theory of practice’ (1977).

## **EXPLAINING USER-DEALING: THE DRUGS CRIME LINK**

Research has long shown that drugs and crime are strongly correlated (Bennett and Holloway, 2008). Early unsatisfactory explanations reduced the relationship to one of pharmacological determinism (i.e. the drugs ‘make’ people immoral and/or commit violence/crime), or pharmacologically driven economic compulsion (the poorly

resourced/impoverished addict is compelled to commit crime to buy drugs to satisfy their craving). Robust investigations into the drugs-crime nexus however soon problematised simple, causal explanations and data started to emerge that showed **greater** complexity was at the heart of the relationship. One 'classic' early study (Goldstein, 1985) **for example**, helped reveal that very little drug market related violence was the direct result of pharmacology, or, perhaps more surprisingly, related to the economically compulsive need to 'get the next hit'. Goldstein's tri-partite schema located nearly all drug market related violence in the inherent 'systemic' or structural conditions of the illicit drug market. In this model, because illicit drug markets operate under certain 'systemic' conditions and produce a range of situational and contextual events, the likelihood and incidence of violence, is elevated. In opposition to much common-sense thinking, Goldstein's model provided a (mostly) social structural explanation for drug related violence rather than one directly related to pharmacology. Although Goldstein's model has since been subject to a range of critiques, mainly for being overly deterministic (Seddon, 2006; Bean 2008); failing to recognise important differences in market types and types of supplier (cf Coomber, 2015) and/or having methodology issues (Stevens 2011), it has nonetheless been important in showing how individual circumstance, motivation and emotional setting can combine with systemic pressures and conditions to produce particular types of drug related crime. More or less synchronous with Goldstein (e.g. Ball et al., 1982; Chaiken and Chaiken 1982; Nurco et al., 1985; Collins et al., 1985) and in other key works since (e.g. Harrison 1992; Raskin White and Gorman 2000; Golub and Johnson 2004; Bennett and Holloway 2007, 2009), researchers have also revealed the complexity related to the drug use and non-violent crime nexus. Over time and overwhelmingly, a considered examination of aggregated research, data looking at drug related crime depicted greater and greater nuance and a narrowing down of user and contextual characteristics (Tonry and Wilson, 1990; Bennett and Holloway, 2008). When combined with data that showed, *regardless of addiction status*, many committed relatively few crimes (Nurco et al., 1985) and some committed none, it became increasingly clear that the 'drug-using, crime committing population is heterogeneous and

that there are multiple paths that lead to drug use and crime' (Raskin White and Gorman 2000: 151).

A range of recent ethnographic work has addressed some of the shortcomings of aggregated data sets however and provides a closer understanding of drug market and drug related criminality. In particular, these studies offer a fuller picture of why some addicted drug users commit some types of crime and are less engaged in structural and other violence, compared to others, as well as why some addicted drug users commit fewer or no crimes (drug use apart). Some of this detail and depth is resultant of ethnographic methods that are designed to garner depth understanding while others, such as the research presented here, also draw on a theoretical framework that can explain both patterned behaviour in terms of why many do, and many do not engage, to varying degrees, in drug market violence and other forms of drug related crime.

## **USER-DEALER CONCEPTUALISATIONS**

Research to date has illuminated a clear propensity for addicted drug users to undertake acquisitive crime to fund a drugs habit (Cross et al 2001; National Audit Office, 2010; Degenhardt et al., 2009). However, although a strong association between user-dealing and drug dependency has been found, there has been little analytical development of the concept (Moyle and Coomber, 2015). Rudimentary definitions describe user-dealers as individuals who consume so many drugs that they need to sell to cover the costs of their own drug use (Lewis, 1994), and to be motivated by the need to support and 'regulate one's own [drug] habit' (Akhtar and South, 2000:160). Elsewhere, Coomber (2006) defines user-dealers as individuals that 'we might understand as users first and dealers second, who primarily supply [drugs] to support their own drug use' (p.141). This is a theme that has also been emphasised by May et al. (2005) who found that this group did not necessarily recognise themselves as drug dealers. Others have also related the high proportion of user-dealers found within heroin and crack cocaine markets (Johnson, 1995; Bourgois 1995, Coomber 2015), with Jacobs (1999) suggesting that 'by an overwhelming margin', dealers 'that used'

dominate the crack scene. Supporting this, more recently Debeck et al., (2007) highlight that 41% of their sample had generated money for drugs from dealing, while Small et al. (2013) relate that 'most' of their injecting drug user (IDU) sample had experience of more than one type of dealing.

Despite the high proportions of user-dealers suggested to be occupying heroin and crack cocaine markets, there remains a distinct lack of focused empirical research that explores the circumstances, strategy and context that leads an addicted drug user to *choose supply over other income generating activity*. That is not to say that ethnographies haven't provided rich description of participation in urban street markets. Preble and Casey (1969) and Burroughs (1970) for example, provide insight into the life of a 'juggler', described as 'always high and always short' (10), this dealer is said to continually engage in cost benefit decisions around their supply mediated by risk of arrest, robbery and the attraction of acquiring more heroin. Other street level ethnographies have explored subcultural activities that are used by addicted users in order to produce drug or economic gain. 'Hustling' (e.g. begging and doing illicit deeds for dealers) is described as a 'way of life' by Walters (1985), and Lalander (2003) highlights the cultural importance of income generating activity, as well as providing insight into the variation in types of 'work' that are undertaken by dependent users in order to replenish their supply. While studies have highlighted the potential for exercising rational choice by drug dependent methamphetamine and crack cocaine users (Hart, 2013), of the expression of agency and subjectivity in street based heroin markets (Dwyer, 2008), or point to the rational choices of dealers who 'rip off' customers (Jacques et al., 2013), little is known about the choices of users-dealers apart from the suggestion that drug-related activities, including street-level dealing, perhaps represent one of the best available 'hustles' (Field and Walters, 1985). In respect to blame worthiness and harms related to small-scale addicted user-dealing, arguably, user-dealers are less culpable than commercially orientated sellers and this is increasingly recognised in regard to sentencing practice in England, (see Moyle and Coomber, 2015; Coomber, 2004; Moyle et al. 2013; Release, 2009; Harris, 2011;

UNODC, 2015). Although a few studies have pointed to the importance of 'addiction' (Lewis, 1994; Pearson, 2007;) and involvement in supply as an alternative to other acquisitive crime (Akhtar and South, 2000; Shammass et al., 2014), there have been few attempts (at the time of writing), to use theory, particularly Bourdieusian theory, as a means of exploring choice, constraint and culpability concurrently.

## **BOURDIEU ON CRIME: CAPITAL AND FIELD.**

There have been a number of studies that have offered important insight into the realities of street culture as it is lived by drug users and drug suppliers on the streets, both in the UK and internationally. Bourgois' (2003) seminal ethnographic study of social marginalisation and the crack economy in post-industrial El Barrio (East Harlem, New York) followed young men and women, who superfluous to the legal job market, became embroiled in the illegal drugs market and its accompanying cultures of drugs misuse and interpersonal violence. Elsewhere, macro-social forces are flagged in a number of studies where neighbourhood factors such as violence, drug sales (Yonas et al., 2007), social disorganisation and poverty impact local drug/street subculture and the residents who participate in consumption and sales (Dunlap et al., 2010). In an ethnography focussing on crack cocaine users in a UK context, Briggs (2012) suggests that crack using experiences for the 'low life' are directly affected by socio-structural and environmental conditions (105). Briggs' findings concur with many other empirical studies (e.g. Shammass et al. 2014; Bourgois, 2003; Coomber, 2006; Sandberg and Pedersen, 2011, Dunlap et al., 2010) that emphasise the more established notion that social and economic marginalisation are central to understanding recruitment into the lower levels of the illicit drug market. As a way of highlighting the multiple ways in which drug users and sellers respond to these difficulties, several authors have taken on Bourdieu's notion of capital as a means of recognising the 'skills and rationality necessary to manage a lifestyle of crime drug use and dealing' (Sandberg, 2008). Capital broadly refers to the resources that secure one's position in the social order (Bourdieu, 1986) and is commonly used in conjunction with Bourdieu's concept of 'field'. 'Field' is a relational term

defined by Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) as 'a network of relations among the objective positions within it' (p.97). For Bourdieu, the field is a social space of conflict and competition in which agents struggle, depending on their position in the field, to achieve command, or establish monopoly over the species of capital effective within it (Wacquant, 1992:17) and an agent's position is determined by the relative weight of capital they possess (Dumais 2002; Swartz 2002). Bourdieu originally identified four categories of capital: economic, cultural, social and symbolic, but within criminology, social and cultural capital have been most frequently used to show for example how social networks, civic engagement, reciprocity and trust can influence the take up of beneficial behaviours (cf Illan, 2013:8). Social capital may simply be thought of as a social relationship that itself allows individuals to claim access to resources possessed by their associates (Portes, 1998). In exploring deviance and the social world, social capital can encompass the notion of 'reputation', existing through relation to others and providing a valuable resource in the absence of other forms of capital (see Bourgois, 2003; Anderson, 1999). Cultural capital on the other hand, can be understood as an embodied or objectified state (Bourdieu, 1986) and is associated with the disposition to appreciate and understand cultural goods. There is a level of intersectionality at work here and reputation (for example) has also been dealt with as cultural capital with reference to hierarchy, knowledge and levels of opinion formation and influence in a particular social milieu (Stewart and Smith, 2014).

Providing a further contribution that accompanies Bourdieu's original categories of capital, Sandberg and Pedersen (2008) offer the concept of 'street capital', emphasising the significance of street knowledge and success in the 'field' of the local drugs market. Inspired by Bourdieu's (1990) attempts to find a middle road between agency and structure, the authors suggest street capital can be understood as a form of legitimate power that has the ability to form profit. The authors argue here and elsewhere (Sandberg, 2008) that street culture is embodied by young men, who produce traits that facilitate survival within a given field. As with Bourdieu's (1986) descriptions of cultural capital, the concept prioritises cultural



competence (Sandberg, 2008) and highlights the relational and situational character of street skills including experience of the use and sale of drugs, violence and criminal activity (Sandberg and Pedersen, 2008). In a later study Grundetjern and Sandberg (2012) make use of the same concept in order to explore the creative strategies women employed to compete with men within a gendered drug economy. For the female dealers in Grundetjern and Sandberg's research (2008), past and present roles influence agents' capabilities and the resources they can access and, thus, the possibilities for their actions (Bourdieu, 1977: 82–3). Concentrating on street social capital in the late-modern liquid city, Jonathan Ilan (2011) also describes how masculinity and 'crimino-entrepreneurism' can result in the accumulation of 'street social capital' (3), providing young men with important access to illegal contraband markets, allies and protection from violence. A Bourdieusian approach that explores notions of social, cultural and street capital can therefore provide insight into the lived experience of actors in disadvantaged contexts, delineating how their access to resources and their street competency allows survival, or perhaps even success in an illegitimate economy.

## **HABITUS AND CRIME**

Within the fields of criminology and sociology, Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' has been offered as a powerful way of exploring the manner in which individuals negotiate the structural constraints of marginalisation and improvise in an unconscious fashion, often through deviant means. Put simply, the habitus can be interpreted as the way society becomes deposited in the body, in the form of dispositions and structured propensities of thinking and acting (Wacquant, 2005). The habitus has also been described elsewhere as an 'active residue' (Swartz, 2002:635) of an individual's past, which functions to shape the present through 'hexis', the 'embodiment of practice' (Bourdieu, 1977). In practice, the habitus is said to manifest as our demeanour, manner and comportment of the body (Bourdieu, 1977) and generally, how we see and carry ourselves (Jenkins, 2003). The dispositions of the habitus vary according to what position one occupies within the world (Ritzer, 2008) and in this sense, are directly affected by our entire collective history

(Bourdieu, 1990). This social history has since been described as including: the class position one is born into (Dumais, 2002), one's socio-cultural history and our personal biography (Reay, 2004). The habitus concept has been used effectively by Fraser (2011) as a way of exploring the relationship between youth 'gangs' and spacial autonomy in an industrial city. Within ethnographic literature on drug use, following heroin injectors and crack smokers on the streets of San Francisco, Bourgois and Schonberg (2009) employ the concept of habitus as a means of situating the structural forces that shape the lives of those they research. Drawing on a Bourdieusian framework, the authors suggest that ethnic dimensions of habitus allow us to recognise how macro-power relations produce intimate desires and ways of being that become inscribed on individual bodies and routinised in injecting behaviours. In '*Habitus of The Hood*' Skott-Myre and Richardson (2010) also utilise Bourdieusian theory as a means of unpicking the internalisation of often criminogenic or alternative mainstream values and social conditions of marginalised spaces (such as 'hoods'). For the authors, the habitus of the 'hood' not only plays a crucial role in teaching residents what is and what is not acceptable, but also usefully unpicks the relative naturalisation of behaviours and attitudes in certain contexts, which can make practices seem inherent to the spaces in which they occur.

## **BOURDIEU ON CRIME: WHAT'S NEW?**

This paper argues that focusing on notions of capital and/or habitus alone places too much emphasis on either the generative forces of social structures, or risks romanticising rationality and access to resources (capital) as a form of protest or 'resistance'. By way of response, it aims to build on an emerging and fruitful research base that has employed aspects of Bourdieusian theory as conceptual tools (e.g. Sandberg, 2008; Shammass and Sandberg, 2015; Fraser, 2014) in understanding crime and deviance. Rather than drawing on concepts of habitus, capital and field in isolation, we utilise Bourdieu's (1977) 'theory of practice' by making connections between these interrelated concepts in attempt to capture theoretically how (for example) aspects of rationality, the cultures and norms of a specific

drug market and an individual's demeanour can guide choices around practice (Bourdieu 1977) - in this case, income generation. Taking this 'all-inclusive' approach with Bourdieusian theory (and incorporating the interplay of habitus, capital and field as Bourdieu intended) has previously been undertaken in the field of public health and in relation to studies of injecting and the risk environment in particular (See Crawshaw and Bunton, 2009; Parkin, 2013), but within criminology, our use of this method represents a novel approach to understanding deviance. While other studies have tended to focus on concepts in isolation, the starting point and the focus of our analysis of user-dealing is Bourdieu's 'theory of practice', outlined in 1977 but later summed up in this formula in '*Distinction*' (1984): [(habitus) (capital)] + field = practice.

In the context of Bourdieu's formula, practice refers to 'what people do', or how they act (their social action). In order to understand practice we must then consider the 'field' (a socially constituted/structured site or space) where this practice takes place, the power relations at work within those fields (including an individual's access to types of social, cultural and economic capital) and the 'habitus' (their socially constituted disposition). Bourdieu's theory (1977) sought to explain why particular groups of people engage in certain behaviours and why others do not, and it is this inclusivity that we believe lends itself to the examination of user-dealing behaviours. In addition, although this paper takes a theoretical approach, this study also offers insight as to how a Bourdieusian framework can provide direction for policy in regard to critiquing inequitable distribution of criminal responsibility or culpability (see Schlosser, 2012). The paper will now provide an overview of our methodology before situating our findings with reference to this theoretical framework.

## **METHODS**

The data presented in this article is taken from PhD fieldwork undertaken in 2013. The research was originally designed in order to explore drug supply activity that appeared to deviate from conventional behaviours and motivations associated with commercial drug dealing. User-dealing was therefore chosen as an area of empirical investigation for its

distinct conceptual association with 'addiction' or problem drug use. Drawing on a qualitative methodology, this study aimed to explore the motivations, character and scope of activities that were undertaken by user-dealers. Access to this population was secured through a local Drug and Alcohol Action Team, who recruited individuals thought to fit our inclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria was defined as including 'any active or previous users of crack cocaine or heroin over the age of 18, who had any experience of supplying amounts of these substances to support their habit'. The rationale for a non-random sampling criteria, and recruiting those with 'experience' of, rather than current involvement with user-dealing, was to increase our chances of recruiting our sample size. While the initial research proposal was aimed at gaining an understanding of the motivations of this group and whether they could be understood as commercially orientated (xxxxxxx), the inclusion of respondents who had moved in and out of user-dealing also offered data that (through application of a Bourdieusian framework) afforded insight into the alternative 'choices' and constraints faced by addicted users of 'problem drugs'.

In total, 30 'addicted' user-dealers of crack cocaine (n=2), heroin (n=15), heroin and crack (n=12) and amphetamine (n=1) were recruited, of which 65% were men (n=20) and 35% (n=10) women. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the most appropriate data collection method. This was due to their potential for exploring complex social matters in a robust way, whilst also providing an opportunity to follow up and probe on emerging issues (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). Respondents were asked about their particular social contexts and their rationale for becoming involved in this activity, they were also invited to consider whether user-dealing was a preferable way of funding their drug habit, and to explore why this might be. The fieldwork process was granted ethical approval by xxxxxx University Ethics Committee (2010) and respondents were offered a £10 reciprocity payment for their contribution to the research. After the transcription process, the data was uploaded into a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software programme (NVivo 9) and was coded with reference to Bourdieusian concepts found in the theory of practice (1977) (habitus, field,

capital), focussing on any narrative that made reference to (for example) resources, choices, social capital and the norms or context of the local drug market.

## **FINDINGS: APPLYING BOURDIEU'S 'THEORY OF PRACTICE' TO USER-DEALING**

In what follows we explore how Bourdieu's theory of practice can help us deconstruct the practice of user-dealing. Since Bourdieu's (1977) 'theory of practice' is reliant on the concept of 'field', we also spend some time detailing the local drug market milieu to show how the dynamics and cultures of this specific market can interact with habitus and capital in order to guide practice. To provide some insight into user-dealers relative culpability, we also use a Bourdieusian framework to explore the habitus of user-dealers in relation to constraint, 'behaving naturally' and the idea of user-dealing as 'embedded culture' in this 'addicted' population. Finally, we outline the importance of drawing on Bourdieu's 'theory of practice' (1977), underlining the importance of social context (field), access to resources (capital) and socio-cultural history and disposition (habitus) to operationalise the supply event (practice).

## **EXPLORING THE FIELD: A DRUG MARKET IN SOUTH WEST ENGLAND**

Bourdieu did not envisage human action stemming from habitus alone and as we outlined previously, employed the concept of 'field' in order to situate action within the frame of a 'structured system of social positions...the nature of which defines the situation for their occupants' (Jenkins, 1992: 53). To provide some semblance of background to the 'field' that our research population is situated in, we will now outline some of the broader characteristics of this geographical space, and of the mechanics, cultures and codes of the heroin and crack cocaine market as it operates in this context. In terms of geography, the home city of our research population is medium sized by UK standards, and is home to a population of around 250,000 (ONS 2011) in South West England. The number of problem drug users using crack and/or opiates was reported as slightly higher than the England average in 2009/10 and arrest data at least has suggested that this particular drug market is heavily populated with user-dealers, rather than commercially motivated sellers that we

might see for example in the South East of England (xxxxxxx). This high concentration of user-dealers was also reported in our data, with respondents also recounting the user-dealer group as dominating the heroin and crack cocaine market (at street level). In regard to the cultures of supply specific to this field, data suggests that supply was limited to drug market 'players' rather than extended to the general public in the way one might expect an open market to work (see May et al., 2005). Of the user-dealer sample, 64% described their customer base as being made up of individuals described as 'acquaintances' or more broadly, other 'known' heroin/crack cocaine users. 36% of respondents described drug receivers as 'friends' and there were no reports of respondents selling drugs to strangers (xxxxxxxxxxxxx).

#### THE HABITUS, BEHAVING 'NATURALLY' AND SUPPLY AS EMBEDDED IN USER CULTURE

A key theme to emerge from the fieldwork process was a sense that small-scale user-dealer supply (e.g., 'nominated buying' and some 'opportunistic' selling, see XXXXXX) represented a 'natural', 'obvious' and 'normal' response for drug dependent users who could not legitimately fund their drug habit. As a way of explicating these themes, Bourdieu's (1990) concept of habitus can offer some understanding of how user-dealers 'naturalise their daily conduct with situations as a result of particular social influences and interactions' (Parkin and Coomber, 2010:635). This link between the social structure and practice (Mouzelis, 2007) is related to the idea that external 'schemes' are 'deposited' within individual bodies to take the form of 'mental and corporal schemata' (Wacquant, 1992:16) of 'perception, thought, and action' (Bourdieu, 1990:54). Therefore, schemes that form cognitive and motivating structures are socially constituted within the body (Bourdieu, 1977:76), and more specifically, in 'the heads' of actors (Jenkins, 1992:75), providing 'know-how and competence' (Swartz, 2002:625). This theoretical positioning can be reasonably applied to 'Phil', who describes the process of becoming involved in crime to fund his heroin dependency. Although Phil initially describes participation in acquisitive crime as an inconceivable action, after becoming

established within a community where acquisitive crime was routinely enlisted as a means of funding drug dependency, it soon became internalised as a feasible option that was entered into with little reflection - what Bourdieu might see as an instinctive approach (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Bourdieu, 2005):

When I was 22-23 I moved to (names City). I remember seeing all the other boys and girls going out shoplifting every day and I'd think fuck me having to do that every day...know what I mean? And before I knew it, I was doing it without even realising. The times I went out shoplifting...I was always expecting to get caught, but later I didn't care if I got caught, I'd just fill my bag, do you know what I mean?

Phil (33), heroin user.

Although the characteristics of the habitus - that of practical sense (Lamaison and Bourdieu 1986:111) - are largely taken for granted, agents like Phil are however understood to have 'an intimate understanding of the object of the game and the kinds of situations it can throw up' (King, 2000:419). Adding to this, as previously explored, the notion of supply representing an act that is conceived as an extension of a user's own drug consumption (xxxxxxxxxxxxxx) also allows us to view user-dealing as an act that is embedded in the lifestyle of many problem drug users at one stage or another. Examples of this embeddedness and 'matter of a fact' approach toward supply are provided below:

Initially it felt risky, but then when I knew who I was selling to, it was just an everyday thing really, it was just routine, it was just everyday life. As normal as having a cup of tea, just another item on the agenda of your daily routine I suppose.

Ryan (34), heroin and crack user

I didn't really care that much, I was just, it was just my way of life...it's like people who shoplift, it becomes normal, like going to prison and stuff...it's just what you

do...you can get used to anything innit? I mean people lie on their backs all day and it becomes normal to them, as horrendous as that might sound...

Helen (29) ex-heroin user

The practical sense associated with the habitus can be understood as the structure that allows actors to respond to social conditions in a reasonable way, providing a sense of which actions are appropriate, (and those which are not), in a given circumstance (Thompson, 1991:13). Through utilising Bourdieu's theory, the data obtained from 'Ryan' and 'Helen' and the social actions that they describe, may therefore be understood as guided by this 'feel for the game' (Lamaison & Bourdieu, 1986:111). According to Bourdieu, for actors displaying a 'traditional' or non-reflexive habitus, operating in accordance with the habitus implies behaving 'naturally' and in an unselfconscious way (1990a:73). This notion could be argued to have considerable value in explicating how user-dealers in this study consider their role in the supply of Class A drugs as 'normal', 'routine' and embedded in using culture and moreover, how these characteristics, guide their practice (Bourdieu, 1977).

## THE GROUP HABITUS OF USER-DEALERS

Theoretical frameworks pertaining to drug supply have largely considered drug distribution as a structural issue, fundamentally linked to poverty and social exclusion (Dunlap, 1995; Dunlap et al., 2000; Golub, et al., 2005; Johnson et al., 1998). While addiction, marginalisation and economic hardship have been cited as factors that are tied up with user-dealer offending behaviours, there has been little attempt to theorise the group habitus of problem drug users and how this both affects and shapes *decisions* relating to the ways to fund dependency. While the notion of subculture many ordinarily be utilised to unpick and account for shared behaviours, particularly in the context of street settings or enclaves, Bourdieu's formula was deemed to be a valuable theoretical vehicle, since it also encourages us to look for ways in which seemingly individual habits or activities have some element of 'collective dimension' (see Swartz, 2002). Although not everyone encounters the



same experiences and events, and therefore, do not develop similar habitus, communities of dispositions (Richardson and Skott Myhre, 2012) or group/collective habitus (Sweetman, 2003) are likely to be found where individuals have analogous backgrounds and values. In this respect, the actions of social groups cannot be explained simplistically as the aggregate of individual behaviours, but instead must be understood as actions that incorporate influences from culture, traditions and objective structures within the real world (Jenkins, 1992; Crawshaw and Bunton, 2009). Although pathways or trajectories into user-dealer supply are invariably very complex and cannot be generalised as such, this data suggests that in the context of this study, drug dependent users who become involved in user-dealing are characterised by a number of common factors. Significantly, user-dealers appeared to be more likely to own a habitus in *which they have previous history of supply events*, characterised by adolescent experiences of social supply, or by later (irregular) opportunistic sales of recreational drugs. User-dealers also tended to have some sense of *familiarity with supply* as a response to having illegitimate means of purchasing drugs, this resulting in them conceiving supply to be a logical, common sense response to their predicament:

I've always been quite resourceful so like because of my drug selling experience when I was younger, it was kind of my default position to make something out of nothing, so like...I'm not a particularly good thief, I don't want to sell myself, so it was my default position really, I'd grown up as a teenager learning quite fast how lucrative things could be so really like, it just made sense.

Laura (30), crack user

Supporting the findings of Dunlap et al., (2010), as is the case with Laura, respondents commonly made links to their personal biography (Bourdieu 1990; Reay, 2004), describing growing up in an environment where supply is considered a relatively normal part of life for a particular community, and a common way to fund addiction. It was often the case that user-dealers had experienced an upbringing, culturally or through their own personal values, which fashioned a *moral objection to 'real crime'* (xxxxxxx). In line with Bourdieu (1990),

'Laura's' narrative again highlights how the habitus, whilst internalising the social structure, can in part limit what is and what is not possible for one's life (Mouzelis, 2007), subsequently shaping practice (Dumais, 2002). Since Bourdieu does not see human action emanating from habitus (dispositions) alone (Swartz, 2002), the ultimate course of action or practice undertaken by the individual is reliant on two remaining concepts: capital and field.

#### DIMENSIONS OF FIELD AND CAPITAL: STORIES OF FAILURE IN USER-DEALING

To illustrate the importance of the interrelationship of Bourdieu's concepts, we provide some analysis of 'stories of failure' in user-dealing as a way of highlighting the interaction of all three factors in shaping action or practice. Stories of failure, as outlined below, therefore provide an empirical example of how the absence of one of Bourdieu's three interrelating concepts, leads to failure in the drug supply event. Beginning with the concept of field', fields revolve around particular 'social games' involving specific logics and rules (Shammas and Sandberg, 2015:5), what Wacquant (1992) describes as values and regulatory principles (p.17). The narrative below offers some insight into the cultural rules and norms employed to navigate sales behaviour within the 'field' of this particular drugs market. Rather than respondents displaying evidence of unscrupulous selling techniques (see Coomber, 2006), this drug market appears to function as Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992:97) suggest, as 'a relatively autonomous microcosm'. Put simply, there are rules and expectations governing drug sales that are specific to this field (Crossley, 2001). Firstly, in this drug market context, data suggests that product standards in regard to quality and count, constrain possible lines of income generating action available to addicted users:

I'd just be up shoplifting all the time...I'd prefer to sell gear to be honest but it's about getting the right gear, do you know what I mean? Because they've got this TCP shit and that crap...I just would not sell it. If I could get hold of decent gear on a regular basis at the same price all the time then it would be worth doing but...it's so up in the air.

Liam (33), heroin and crack user

Liam's narrative for example, suggests that rules around the standards of substances that govern this particular field can limit the ways in which he funds his drug dependency; this is because his ability to sell rests on being able to acquire good quality substances. In this respect, the inability to find good quality drugs and the field specific cultural norms guiding selling strategies had the effect of leading Liam to engage in shoplifting, rather than his 'preferred' practice of user-dealing. Along with the concept of 'field', empirical findings also suggest that the absence of *capital* had a detrimental effect on an addicted user's ability to both 'start up' a dealing operation, and continue to supply drugs. To begin with, access to financial capital was commonly considered an important requirement for launching a small-scale supply operation, and it was suggested that it would be difficult for many users to save the money needed to purchase a bulk amount (more than an 'eighth' – 3.5grams). Adding to this, as outlined in the quote below, the notion of 'social capital' was also important. Without the demand or the contacts to supply these drugs with, a user could be pushed toward involvement in theft and petty crime and therefore the course of action available to him would be limited (Ritzer, 2008):

I had to do other things you know, I had to shoplift and steal and rip people off, like bad things really, petty crime...I did it because the demand wasn't there or I didn't have the money to cash up for it in the first place.

Jago (42), heroin user

The notion of 'street capital' (Sandberg, 2008; Sandberg and Pedersen, 2009; Grundetjern and Sandberg, 2012) also had particular relevance for those who had 'failed' in supply. The concept has been highlighted as emphasising the importance of 'early socialisation' and the 'practical rationality' involved in supply careers (Grundetjern and Sandberg, 2012:625). In this study, respondents who struggled with the drug dealing role appeared to have insufficient capabilities, particularly in regard to the practical knowledge of how to manage an

increasing operation and the demands and hassles that come along with supplying drugs (see Fleetwood, 2011). This often resulted in increasing anxiety and a need to choose another way to fund their dependency:

I just had the opportunity and we owed a bit of money so it was like, do you want to do this to clear your debt? So it was like, yeah, ok then. At the end we were selling an ounce but it started off that we were just selling an eighth and that was like a couple of days to get rid of that and then it got a bit more and a bit more and then the more people you've got coming and then they want a bit more, something like that...so its just building...the stress was unbelievable, that's why we stopped, because it was just so stressful, we were always thinking the police, the police, the police...(sighs)...

Sven (45), heroin user.

This relative deficit of knowledge, competence and 'street' skills (Sandberg and Pedersen 2009; Grundetjern and Sandberg, 2012) described by Sven can be associated with the nature of an individual's habitus (see below) and their 'feel for the game' (Bourdieu 1998:25). In this context the habitus may limit access to particular forms of capital and therefore limit their success in user-dealing as a potential income generating activity. Along with the pressures and strains of setting out on your own (or selling on behalf of someone else), data also indicates that levels of social capital are incredibly important in enabling the user to operationalise the supply event. Social capital provides the means in which drugs are both acquired and distributed, with participation and access to supply networks being instrumental in this endeavour. The application of a Bourdieusian framework suggest that generally, if there is an initial lack of social, 'street' or economic capital, or the subsequent loss of these resources, the supply event cannot be sustained, regardless of the habitus of that particular actor.

## **DISCUSSION**

In this paper we have used our empirical research with dependent heroin and crack-cocaine user-dealers to illustrate how a Bourdieusian analytical framework can provide a fruitful approach for understanding the supply act. This appears to be the first time the 'theory of practice' has been used to understand user-dealing, and while theories that explore the relationship between drug supply and poverty, social exclusion, opportunity or strain are insightful (see Dunlap et al. 2010; Golub et al., 2005), they do not adequately address why supply is favoured over other forms of acquisitive crime as a means of funding a drugs dependency (and/or the ways that this manifests for those individuals). As we have seen, the drug crime link is characterised by a level of determinism that is incompatible with the lived experiences of problem drug users, who exhibit reflexivity and choice in how they generate income for heroin and crack cocaine. In this sense, the application of this theoretical model as a way of understanding income generation is able to effectively account for the nuance found in our sample population. We acknowledge the limitations of this research, with its focus on user-dealers rather than a wider population of 'addicted users'. We therefore encourage future research that would focus on these issues with 'drug dependent users' rather than a group recruited by the nature of their income generating activity. Numerous scholars have taken particular issue with the 'deterministic' aspects of Bourdieu's 'theory of practice', stressing an acute under emphasis on the rational, calculative, and reflexive aspects of human action (Jenkins, 2003; Mouzelis, 2007). However, the idea of unconscious and non-introspective habitus was always theorised by Bourdieu to occur in normal and unremarkable circumstances, which through 'polythetic adaptability', required little rational strategy (Mouzelis, 2007). Bourdieu and Waquant (1992) offer incorporation of notions of rational strategy and reflexivity, but this is enacted in the situational context of when 'crises' occur, for example 'when there is a lack of fit between dispositions and positions' (ibid). Therefore, for addicted drug users who have no legitimate means of supporting their habit (and for whom other criminal acts are conceived as problematic), this study suggests that participation in user-dealing may be considered a relatively instinctive response to this social context as there appears to be a *close fit* between their habitus and field position (see

Mouzelis, 2007). Ryan and Helen for example, provided empirical examples of supply as 'routine', as part of 'everyday life' and overall as a practice that was embedded within their drug use. However, this study also highlighted how choice and aspects of reflection were present within our respondents' narratives in regard to the type of income generating response they selected. Examples of this strategy are found within the narratives of Liam, David and Sven who did not possess the cultural competences (street capital), skills and experience (habitus) to succeed in supply and instead made *choices* to engage in different income generating activity. At a broad level, while this article acknowledges the contribution of criminology's focus on the habitus as a way of understanding the 'street worlds of drug users and dealers' (Fraser, 2013), we believe that going further and employing the more inclusive formula of [(habitus) (capital)] + field = practice (1984: 101) has the potential to offer an appropriate theoretical tool for explicating the influence of choice and access to capital, whilst acknowledging the predisposing nature of socially constituted fields to the variance in modes of income generation in user-dealing populations.

A Bourdieusian framework also provides explanatory power in assessing culpability - a defendant's 'moral blameworthiness' (Loewy, 1987). Jurisprudence literature elucidates the point that even when a person violates criminal law, it does not follow that liability is always appropriate (Robinson and Darley, 1995). In addition, Ashworth (2015) highlights that 'culpability refers to the factors of intent, motive and *circumstance* that determine how much an offender should be held accountable for his act' (156). While this is a small sample population, this in-depth research re-emphasises the more established idea of drug supply as a response to dependency. However, going further than this, it also promotes understanding of the this notion of 'circumstance', of marginalisation and absence of legitimate opportunity through inclusion of the interrelating concepts of habitus, capital and field. In-depth data does not provide a picture of our respondents as morally bankrupt, unscrupulous dealers desperate to secure their next fix (see Coomber, 2006; Boyd, 2002). Utilisation of a Bourdieusian framework instead allows us to consider how structural

pressures and exposure to cultural norms in particular fields can be internalised (through habitus) by individuals like Laura who take on supply as a logical *instinctive* solution for income generation; Bourdieu called this ‘cohesion without concept’ (Reed-Danahay, 2005) or likewise, acting like ‘a fish in water’. The key issue for culpability here is the notion of ‘embeddedness’ and supply as a natural progression or extension of use, a factor that is currently not sufficiently acknowledged in existing sentencing guidelines (See Sentencing Council, 2012). In the same way that academics and advocacy groups have called for more recognition of the low-level role and lack of socio-economic opportunity afforded to ‘drug mules’ (see Fleetwood, Lai, 2012), we suggest that implicit power dimensions associated with habitus - ultimately realised as an understanding of what is conceivable, likely or unlikely for people of a certain social standing (Swartz, 1990; Bourdieu, 1990) - provide a justification for incorporating user-dealers within the ‘lesser role category’ of our current sentencing apparatus.

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